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Hong Kong

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

Country Information on Maximum Residue Limits Regulations

2004

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Report Highlights:

This report provides background information on Hong Kong's regulations on Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs). Hong Kong does not have its own MRLs. It makes reference to MRLs and EMRLs for pesticides recommended by Codex in its monitoring program.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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Background

This report provides background information on Hong Kong's regulations on Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs). Hong Kong does not have its own MRLs. It makes reference to MRLs and EMRLs for pesticides recommended by Codex in its monitoring program.

Which government agencies are involved in MRL establishment and what are their responsibilities?

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) is responsible for the overall food sale in Hong Kong, be it imported or domestic. On a routine basis, the FEHD takes samples of different foods for analysis for verification if the pesticide residues are within the "tolerance levels".

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) is responsible for the use of pesticides in Hong Kong. It regulates the import, manufacture, formulation, distribution, sale and supply of all pesticides. Control is effected through:

- registration of active ingredients and control of inert ingredients;
- licensing of pesticide traders;
- permit requirement to deal with unregistered pesticides; and
- setting requirements for labeling and bottling of pesticides

What laws and regulations guide the development and enforcement of MRLs for pesticides?

The Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, Cap. 132, governs general food safety. The ordinance, administered by FEHD, stipulates that no person shall sell or possess or consign for the purpose of selling any food that are unwholesome, adulterated or unfit for human consumption. Control in specific areas such as preservatives, coloring matter, harmful substances, metallic contamination, etc. are provided in subsidiary legislation under the ordinance. However, Hong Kong currently does not have any specific subsidiary legislation guiding the enforcement of MRLs for pesticides as far as food is concerned.

The use of pesticides, however, is regulated through the Pesticide Ordinance, Cap.133, which is administered by AFCD. In accordance with the Ordinance, a list of registered pesticides approved for use in Hong Kong is published in the Gazette every year. The list is also available from AFCD for reference (http://www.afcd.gov.hk/quarantine/animals_e.htm).

What is the process for the establishment of MRLs?

Hong Kong does not establish its own MRLs. It currently adopts the Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) and Extraneous Maximum Residues Limits (EMRLs) for pesticides recommended by Codex Alimentarius Commission of the WHO/FAO (World Health Organization/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). When Codex standards are not available, reference will be made to standards set by other regulatory authorities and results of risk assessment.

How frequently is the printed copy or website listing of MRLs updated?

While Hong Kong does not set its own MRLs, it adopts Codex MRLs. Codex has set and recommended the MRLs/EMRLs for some 190 pesticides. These maximum limits are revised and published from time to time. Details and latest amendments can be obtained from the

homepage of Codex Alimentarius Commission.

http://faostat.fao.org/faostat/pestdes/jsp/pest_q-e.jsp

Is there a defined regulatory process for the establishment of import MRLs?

Hong Kong adopts the Codex MRLs and EMRLs of Codex for all food products consumed in the market regardless of its country of origin. Only when Codex standards are not available, FEHD will draw reference from standards set by other regulatory authorities.

What residues of pesticides define the MRL? That is, is only the parent chemical measured or are specific metabolites included?

Whether only the parent chemical is measured or specific metabolites are also included depends on what pesticide residues are tested against as well as the capacity of Hong Kong government laboratory. The Hong Kong government claims that they will draw reference from international practice as well.

Are MRLs established for crop groups, individual crops or both?

Hong Kong follows Codex standards.

Does Hong Kong have a routine surveillance/testing program for pesticide residues in imported foods? If so, please describe it, i.e. number of samples tested, how priorities are identified, etc.

Food samples are tested at every stage of the supply process: from import and manufacture to the wholesale and retail stages. In 2003, about 57,000 samples of food were tested, representing eight samples for every 1,000 people in Hong Kong. Food samples undergo microbiological examination, chemical analysis and radioactivity tests, allowing an assessment as to whether or not they conform to legal standards and labeling requirements. Some 34,649 samples were conducted chemical (including toxicity) tests and 17,485 samples or 50.5% of which belonged to pesticide residue testing.

The majority of Hong Kong's fresh vegetables supplies come from China, which are imported through the border at Man Kam To. The Man Kam To Food Laboratory provides expeditious testing services on fresh produce imported from the Mainland China. Testing parameters include Methamidophos, Isocarbophos, other Organophosphorous pesticides, Pyrethroids, N-Methyl Carbamates and Fungicides. The screening tests of produce coming from China were not included in the samples testing figures above.

Does Hong Kong accept Codex MRLs: If not, do Codex MRLs play any role?

Hong Kong draws reference to MRLs and EMRLs for pesticides recommended by Codex in its monitoring program.

What actions are taken when residues are found above the MRL?

Depending on the circumstances of each case, the action can vary from warning, product recall, seizure and disposal, temporary suspension of import, hold and test at point of entry to prosecution. The retailers and other responsible persons along the supply chain may be prosecuted.

Are there default pesticide enforcement levels: What are they?

A regulatory level of 1.0 ppm was set for methamidophos and isocarbophos, two agents found commonly abused in the past.

Provide the name, office telephone and email address of a pertinent government official for user contact purposes.

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